

Low-key celebration marks two years of acclaimed service which rebuilds adults’ confidence

# Shared Lives re-awakens a sense of purpose

A UNIQUE service in Moray which is a shining example of care in the community at work has celebrated its second anniversary.

A special band of committed carers have opened the doors of their homes to welcome into their lives adults who need some extra help and support. They work to help their service users maintain their independence and sense of identity.

Small scale and very personalised, Shared Lives is one of Moray Council's newest community care services and is proving to be a valued way of helping people live their lives to the full.

From working on a jigsaw at the dining room table, making a pot of soup for lunch, taking a trip to a café for a blether over a cuppa or visiting a museum to recall memories from days gone by, there are plenty of familiar as well as new experiences for service users to enjoy.

Shared Lives offers flexible and bespoke options for support which can range from a few hours of day support each week to overnight stays and longer periods of respite/short breaks.

It is delivered by skilled and trained individuals who come from all walks of life. Each is self-employed but contracted to work for the council. They see their service not only as a job, but as a way to make a positive difference to someone's life.

The professional carers are supported by the council's Shared Lives officer, Diane McLeary, who ensures they are fully vetted and undertake assessment and training provided by Moray Council, including safety checks of their homes. They can then go forward to be matched with services users and introduced through a series of taster visits which family members can also attend to put their minds at ease.

Shared Lives promotes choice, control and person-centred care, explained Diane: "The service offers a special kind of support because the Shared Lives carers use their own homes as a base to provide their care service. They help adults with a variety of needs to develop their potential and get the most out of life."

Following a stroke which affected her speech and left with weakness down one side of her body,

**"It's a proper home here and I really enjoy coming. I feel relaxed and able to enjoy life."**  
Maurice Johnston

former swimming teacher and pool manager Jean Sutherland (82) was keen to regain the skills needed for independent living.

Jean worked with a care officer to plan her support needs.

She gave day services a try, but decided it wasn't for her and it was suggested the Shared Lives service might be a good alternative.

Following a taster visit to the home of Hilary Williamson, Jean hasn't looked back, becoming part of the family along with fellow service user retired telecoms engineer Maurice Johnston (91), who stays with his son and daughter-in-law.

He started coming to Hilary's home to give his family a break, leading to his latest eight-night respite stay in what has become his home away from home.

"It's a proper home here and I really enjoy coming. I feel relaxed and able to enjoy life," said Maurice, who keeps his mind active with games of draughts and puzzles.

Both he and Jean love the rural setting of Hilary's home and getting out into the garden. Jean has also returned to her hobby of cross stitch after a special table attachment was sourced to hold her work in place. Thanks to Hilary's help, she has learned how to work the needle left-handed.

Not that day support means there is much time for sitting about as Hilary often arranges trips to restaurants for lunch and the trio have just enjoyed a visit to the Fochabers Heritage Museum which proved to be a real trip down memory lane.

Despite having no previous experience in the caring profession, after hearing about Shared Lives Hilary decided to find out more and pursue it as a new career.

"I saw it as an opportunity to make a difference in people's lives in a really relaxed way. It was a benefit to be able to work from home and I feel this is a calm and peaceful setting for people to enjoy," explained Hilary.

"This is the most enjoyable and rewarding job I have ever had."

She is able to take two clients at a time and through the activities she provides – which are tailored to the abilities and wishes of her service users – works to keeps them mentally stimulated, as physically active as possible and connected to the community to reduce any feelings of isolation.

Her dedication to helping make a difference is echoed by registered mental health nurse Angela Baker who spent 20 years working for the NHS and for herself in the community.

She saw Shared Lives as a way to continue to utilise her skills and experience.



Jean Sutherland (left) and Aileen Grant reminiscing at the Elgin Library event. Picture: Eric Cormack, NS

**"This is the most enjoyable and rewarding job I have ever had."**

Hilary Williamson

"I like the flexibility of being able to decide how many days I want to work and I am treated as a professional by health and social care staff," said Angela, who currently provides placements for six people at various times during the week, with activities including trips to the beach, home baking and visits to her ponies at the bottom of the garden.

Among her service users is Joy Cumine (77) who, after her husband died, moved to Burghead to live with her daughter.

She explained: "I have mobility problems and as my daughter is out working all day I was on my own and not seeing anyone. It affected my confidence. I went to a day service but didn't like it – this is more my style and I am building up my confidence again."

Referrals to the service come through the council's Community Care team or via the Shared Lives Officer and demand continues to grow. Already a team of four committed carers are providing placements to 22 service users with a further two having just undergone their assessments and another pair now embarking on the process.

Each month the current and potential Shared Lives carers get together for a focus group at their suggestion, giving them an opportunity to learn from and offer support to one another.



The old hockey photo which took Aileen, who is pictured second from the left on the front row, back in time to her school days.

## Inspector gives project a very good report

THE Shared Lives project was rated as very good by the Care Inspectorate in April.

Inspector Lindsey McWhirter said the service provides very good training and support for the carers and works closely with service users and their families to ensure good person-centred support.

She said the manager and project officer were committed to developing the service further across Moray.

"They demonstrate a commitment to monitor the service, take account of people's views and continue to improve the provision to ensure a quality service is provided," she added.

In terms of quality of care, staffing and management and leadership, she rated the service very good.

Qualifications are not needed to join the Shared Lives team, with a friendly, caring nature and a flexible approach being more important.

Once an applicant has successfully completed the recruitment process, they will receive free training and ongoing support.

Anyone interested in becoming a Shared Lives carer can make contact by emailing [diane.mcleary@moray.gov.uk](mailto:diane.mcleary@moray.gov.uk) or calling 01343 563450 to find out more. General information on the service is also available from the the Shared Lives officer directly.



Helen Nicholl enjoys the Shared Lives celebration with husband Sandy (centre) at Elgin Library. NS



Carer Trevor Geddes looks at some old photographs with Craig Cockburn. NS

## Teenagers charged over thefts

FOUR teenagers have been charged after a spate of thefts in the Buckie area.

Officers in the town have this week expressed their gratitude to the public, for providing information which they say helped them track down a group of youths.

According to police, a series of thefts took place between April 3 and June 2.

During that time, it is claimed the recycling centre at Gollachy was broken into five times, items were stolen from two parked cars in the Buckpool area, and a flat and a bakery in the town were targeted.

Police said that four teenagers – aged 13, 14, 17 and 18 – have now been reported to the relevant authorities.

Sergeant Mike McKenzie, who led the enquiry, said: "Although the value of property stolen during these incidents was not particularly high, the time and cost of repairing damaged property and replacing stolen items caused much inconvenience to those affected."

"I would sincerely like to thank the people of Buckie for passing on information about suspicious behaviour and continuing to work with us to help tackle crime in the town."

Anyone with information about crime in the Buckie area is asked to contact Police Scotland on 101, or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 if wishing to remain anonymous.

## Carer takes much from the job too

THE service enjoyed a celebration and afternoon of reminiscences in Elgin Library last week which included Aileen Grant (81) and carer Hilary Williamson looking fondly at a picture of the Milne's High School first XI hockey team from 1948-49.

During a visit to the Fochabers Heritage Museum they came across the picture, which included Aileen.

"That brought back great memories," said Aileen, who is from Urquhart originally but now lives in Fochabers.

Hilary admitted experiences like that make the job so rewarding.

"This is the best job I have ever had. My daughter said to me recently this was the ideal job for me because I am such a caring person, which was really nice."

The celebration was also attended by Elgin councillor Barry Jarvis, who has taken a keen interest in the project.

"I was delighted to attend the Shared Lives event and even more delighted to see the progress that has been made over the past two years in the service," he said.

"This is an innovative and exciting project that looks to embrace traditional values and puts service users' needs at the heart of the delivery."

Councillor Jarvis said the staff involved in the service showed great enthusiasm and compassion.

"I look forward to seeing how the service continues to develop in future years as they start to provide respite services as part of their package," he added.

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